



NEWSLETTER OF THE LONDON CHAPTER,
ONTARIO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
P.O. Box 2574, Station B, London, ON. N6A 4G9



October, 1992

92-6

Archaeology in the Mixtec Mountains of Mexico

Laura Finsten
McMaster University

Sticking to the international flavour of recent speaker nights, this month we feature the "ups and downs" of survey work in the Mixtec Mountains by Laura Finsten (I know, I know, last month I said the presentation would be on the Yucatan Region, so I goofed...so what else is new!?). Come on out for a trip through the Mixtecs...hiking boots required! Meeting time is 8 PM on October 8th, and as usual will be at the London Museum of Archaeology.

Next Month: On November 12th, Dana Poulton will discuss his work on the 17th century Seneca Bead Hill site in Scarborough.

CONGRATS, "DR." PETE!!!!

Chapter Executive

ANNUAL RATES

Individual.....	\$15.00
Family.....	\$18.00
Institutional.....	\$21.00
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EXECUTIVE REPORT

While the Executive is happy to report that the Chapter's Secretary, Tom Arnold, was recently hired by Dillon Engineers, his relocation to Halifax has meant some shuffling of the Executive. Tom has traded positions with Lorelyn Giese, who will serve as the Chapter's secretary for the remainder of the year. As well, since Tom was heading the archaeological assessment at Grosvenor Lodge, we are keen to get this project completed before Tom leaves. If you can help out, please call Tom or Pat at 645-2844, or Pat after hours at 438-4817. Fieldwork is still being conducted every Saturday morning between 9 AM and 1 PM.

On other fronts, the Chapter, as part of its rent at Grosvenor Lodge, needs to provide 21 hours a month of volunteer time to the Lodge. Currently reception desk duties have been assigned to the Chapter for Friday Mornings. If you can help out, by filling in part of the reception time or by volunteering other time, please give Pat a call. Finally, it is time to start seeking candidates to serve on the Chapter Executive for the 1993 year. Anyone interested should contact Neal Ferris of the Chapter's nominating committee at 433-8401, or 432-2165 after hours.

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A MEETING TO DISCUSS THE:

Minister's Advisory Committee Report on New Heritage Legislation and Proposed Revisions to the Ontario Heritage Act

with

Dan Schneider

Heritage Policy Branch, Ministry of Culture and Communications

Monday October 26th, 7:30 PM, Grosvenor Lodge, 1017 Western Road, London

For the last several years, the heritage community in Ontario and the Ministry of Culture and Communications have been working towards revising the Ontario Heritage Act. As part of this effort, a Minister's Advisory Committee was formed in 1991, consisting of representatives from a wide spectrum of interests affected by heritage legislation, including heritage activists, ethnocultural groups, municipalities, labour, and the development industry. The MAC group was instructed to review and provide feedback on proposals regarding the purpose and scope of the legislation, as well as to provide detailed advice on specific provisions of the legislation. MAC's final report to the Minister was released to the public in September. Copies are available for review at the Ministry's office at 55 Centre Street, or at Grosvenor Lodge. Additional copies can be obtained by calling Allen Tyyska at 416-314-7164.

The purpose of this meeting is to provide all London and area heritage organizations and individuals an opportunity to learn more about the proposed revisions, to discuss these revisions and ask questions of MCC representatives. This will be also an opportunity to learn what happens now, and what steps you can take, if you support the proposed revisions, to ensure that they are considered by the government. Everyone with a strong interest in seeing changes to the heritage legislation in this province is encouraged to attend. Everyone attending is encouraged to review the MAC report before this meeting.

SOCIAL REPORT

Recently, the OAS provincial Executive appointed the London and Windsor Chapters with the task of organizing the OAS symposium for 1993. The intention is to hold the symposium in Windsor, with the London Chapter assisting the Windsor Chapter by helping to organize the event. Anyone interested in helping out with the organization of this symposium should contact a member of the London Chapter Executive.

While the last issue of **KEWA** announced plans to hold a vote on possible designs for a Chapter T-shirt at the September Speaker's Night, the vote was put off a month because several members with design ideas were unable to attend the meeting. So here is your last chance to submit your design for the October Speaker Night, and possibly win a T-shirt for your efforts. Also postponed was a vote on whether or not to continue holding speaker nights at the London Museum of Archaeology, or to move them to Grosvenor Lodge. Members have expressed opinions favouring both options. Should you have a preference but don't know if you will be able to attend the November meeting, please let your views be known to the Executive before hand.

Finally, the Chapter is still looking for a place to hold the Christmas party. If we don't have any suggestions soon, we'll go ahead and plan to hold the party at Grosvenor Lodge.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This month we feature an article from Eva MacDonald and Martin Cooper of Archaeological Services Inc., proving that the Ministry of Transportation is not the only CRM agency who can fill the pages of **KEWA**! As well, following this article is the 1992 **KEWA** membership list - make sure you're on there!

THE BIRCH SITE (BcGw-29)

A LATE IROQUOIAN SPECIAL PURPOSE SITE IN SIMCOE COUNTY, ONTARIO

Eva M. MacDonald & Martin S. Cooper (Archaeological Services Inc.)

Introduction

In July of 1990, Archaeological Services Inc. conducted a salvage excavation of the Birch site (BcGw-29), a Late Iroquoian special purpose site located approximately 300 metres west of Highway 27, north of Harvie Road, in the City of Barrie. This work was carried out under archaeological consulting licence 90-021, under the project direction of Mr. Martin Cooper and the field direction of Mr. Rick Sutton.

Environmental Setting

The northern boundary of the site is demarcated by the steep edge of a broad, curved ridge that forms part of the Simcoe uplands (Figure 1). The uplands extend from south of Barrie,

through the Coldwater area, north to the Penetang peninsula and are separated by steep-sided, level valleys. The surface of the ridge in the area south of Barrie has been smoothed by deposits of sand and gravel, making the soils extremely permeable. A number of springs issue from its north slope, including one which feeds a tributary of Bear Creek located 200 m to the northwest of the site. The creek flows north into an extensive wetland, known locally as the Allendale Marsh, that would have been characterized by such species as elm, black ash and soft maple. The original forest cover in the Simcoe uplands was dominated by hardwood species such as sugar maple and beech, along with white pine. Also present were yellow birch, hemlock and basswood (Chapman and Putnam 1973:307-309).

The topography of the site is generally level, and the soils are comprised of sandy loams that are considered excellent for corn agriculture because they are easy to work and they warm up early. Previous archaeological investigations in the Simcoe uplands, in particular in Innisfil Township, have demonstrated that the uplands had been occupied extensively by Iroquoian groups during the Middle Iroquoian time period (*circa* A.D. 1300-1400), but that by the contact period, groups had migrated north of Barrie into the area now known as "Huron" (Heidenreich 1971; Lennox *et al* 1986).

Previous Research

The first archaeological survey of Innisfil Township was carried out by Andrew F. Hunter, who recorded the presence of 64 Iroquoian sites in the township during the late nineteenth century (Popham 1950:82). He obtained information about these sites primarily by visiting farmers in the township and examining archaeological material reported to him. Although he did not publish the results of his survey in Innisfil, his carefully preserved field notes have been examined by subsequent researchers such as Popham, who attempted to plot the location of Hunter's Innisfil sites. It would appear that the Birch site was not one of those located by Hunter (Popham 1950:83).

The first settlement pattern data to be published for an Iroquoian site in southern Simcoe County was from the Wiacek site (BcGw-26), partially excavated by P. Lennox in 1983 (Lennox *et al* 1986). The remaining portion of the site was excavated by Archaeological Services Inc. in 1990. In 1984, Lennox conducted a survey of the Barrie area which further identified several Iroquoian sites under threat of destruction from urban development. This in turn resulted in the partial excavation of the Molson site (BcGw-27) in 1985.

The Birch site (BcGw-29) was one of 29 sites identified during the Southern Simcoe County Archaeological Project conducted in 1985-1986 by G. Warrick (1988). The purpose of Warrick's survey was to identify the extent and nature of the Iroquoian population of Innisfil and West Gwillimbury Townships. Seven artifacts were collected from the surface of the Birch site in 1985, including two Huron Incised rim sherds.

The site was relocated in 1989 during an archaeological assessment of the Cityview subdivision. A controlled surface collection of the site yielded 24 artifacts (Archaeological Services Inc 1989).

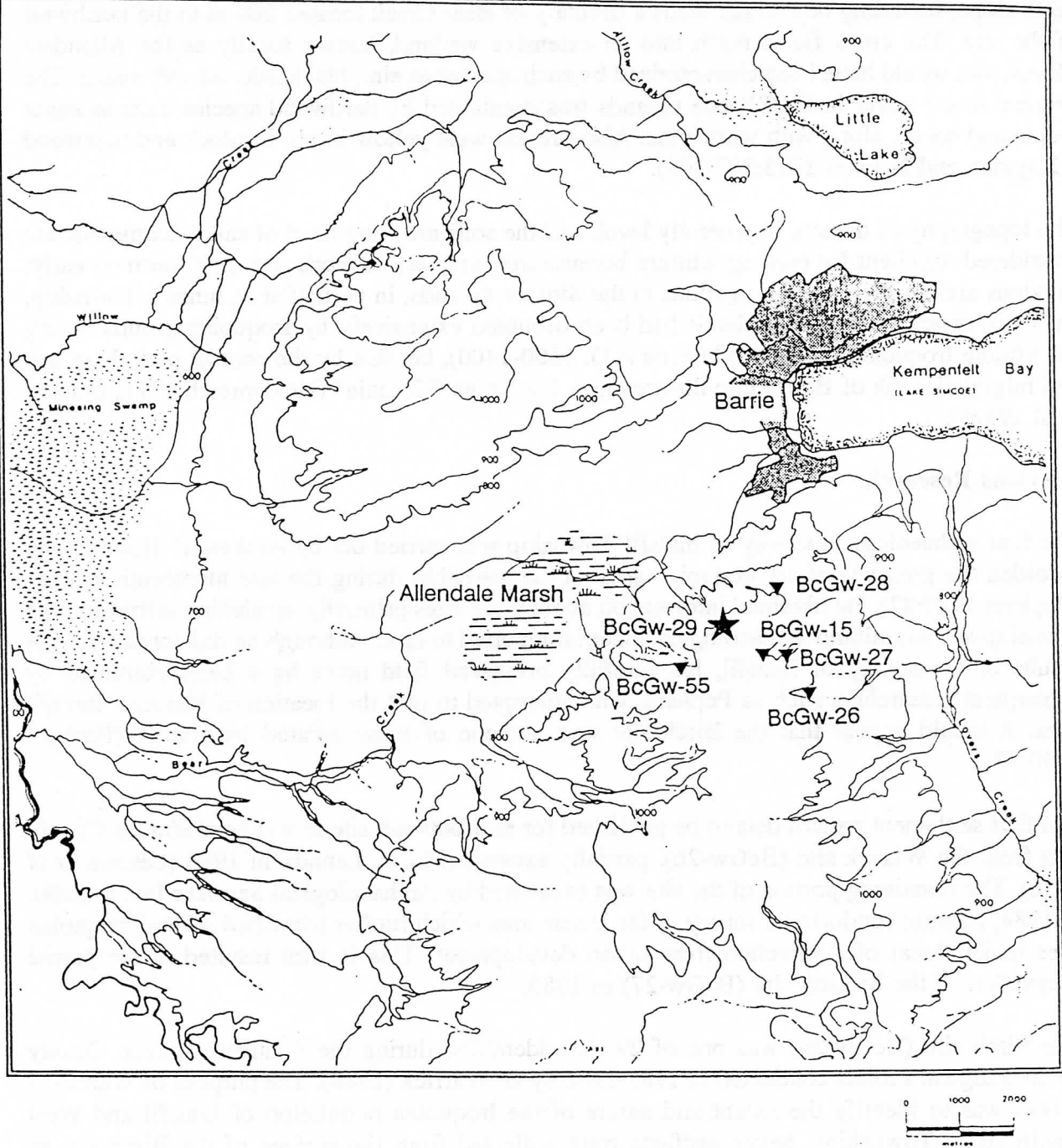


Figure 1: Location of the Study Area (adapted from Lennox et al 1986).

1989). The assemblage comprised two chert flakes, one faunal fragment and 21 ceramic sherds, including one analyzable rim sherd and two rim fragments. The diffuse nature and small size of the scatter, its location on well drained arable soils, and its close proximity to several known Iroquoian village sites further suggested that it may have been an hamlet or cabin.

Excavation Procedure

In order that subsurface settlement features could be recorded, a gradall was employed to remove the ploughzone. Work began in a core rectangular area of 3,400 square metres where the surface scatter had been concentrated, and was expanded to include three 20-25 metre long exploratory trenches (Figure 2). A five metre grid was established over the site and the exposed areas was shovel shined. Once subsurface settlement features had been located, they were recorded, photographed and excavated. Soil samples were taken from all pit features and 60% of the post moulds were sectioned to determine their shape and depth.

Settlement Patterns

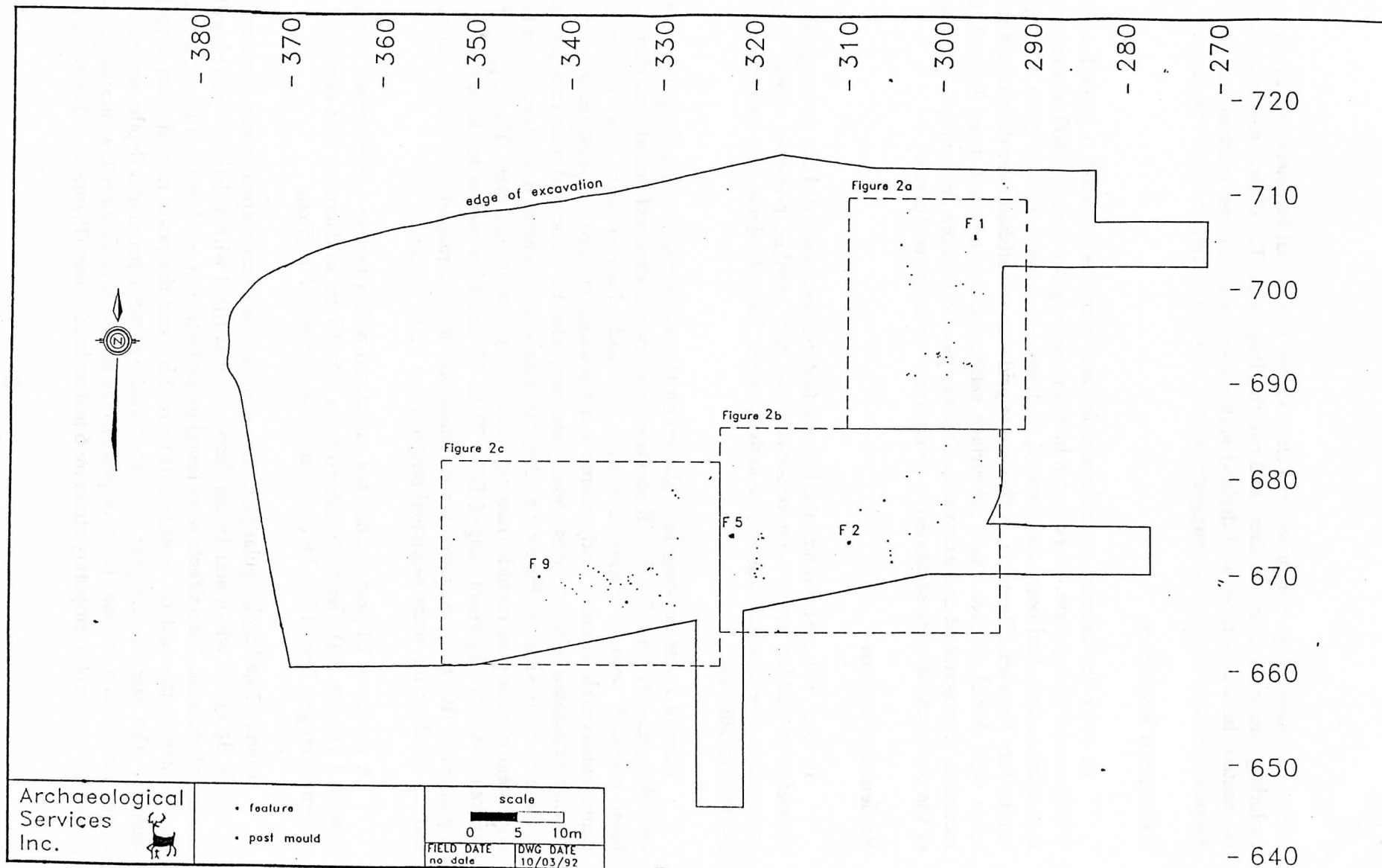
In total, 101 post moulds and four pit features were recorded but no longhouse patterns, palisades or midden areas were observed. The post moulds, however, would appear to be arranged in five discrete clusters, or activity areas, four of which may be associated with pit features (Figure 2).

Feature 1 was an irregularly-shaped pit that measured 51 cm in length, 26 cm in width and 30 cm deep (Figure 3). The fill consisted of a layer of dark soil mixed with charcoal that had been overlaid with a lighter coloured soil and charcoal mix. The fill contained 32 plain/unanalyzable ceramic body sherds and numerous carbonized plant remains. Feature 1 is directly associated with one post mould, and may also be associated with two post alignments in the immediate vicinity (Figure 2.a). Approximately seven metres to the west was a north-south alignment of four post moulds (ranging from 7 to 13 cm in diameter). The depths of the posts sectioned in this alignment ranged from 22 to 27 cm. Five metres to the south an east-west alignment of five posts was also noted. These post moulds ranged from 4 to 7 cm in diameter, and the depth of the posts sectioned ranged from 12 to 14 cm.

A cluster of 21 post moulds not associated with a feature was observed to the south of Feature 1 (Figure 2.a). The posts ranged from 4 to 10 cm in diameter. The depths of the posts sectioned ranged from 15 to 26 cm, with a mean depth of 19.5 cm.

Feature 2 had an irregular plan view and shallow basin-shaped profile. It measured 50 cm in length, 36 cm in width and 16 cm deep, and was filled with a dark soil mixed with a small amount of charcoal. No artifacts were found in the feature. A north-south alignment of four posts was located to the east of Feature 2 (Figure 2.b), and the posts ranged from 6 to 16 cm in diameter. The base of each post cross-sectioned was not tapered and depths ranged from 14 to 23 cm. As part of a diffuse cluster of posts to the northeast of Feature 2, a circular pattern of five posts may represent a temporary structure 6 metres in diameter (Figure 2.b). The posts were fairly

Figure 2: Birch Site (BcGw-29).



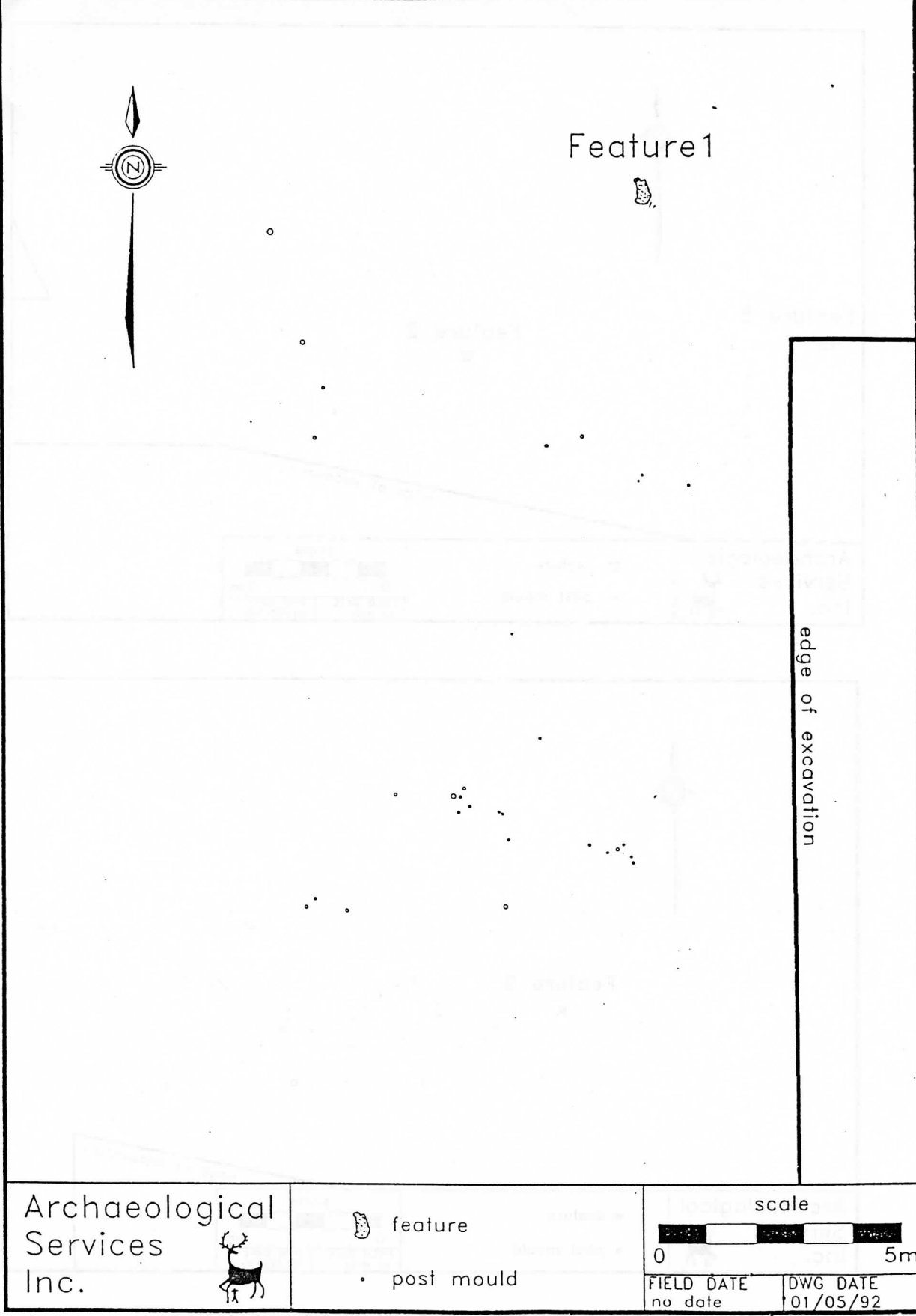
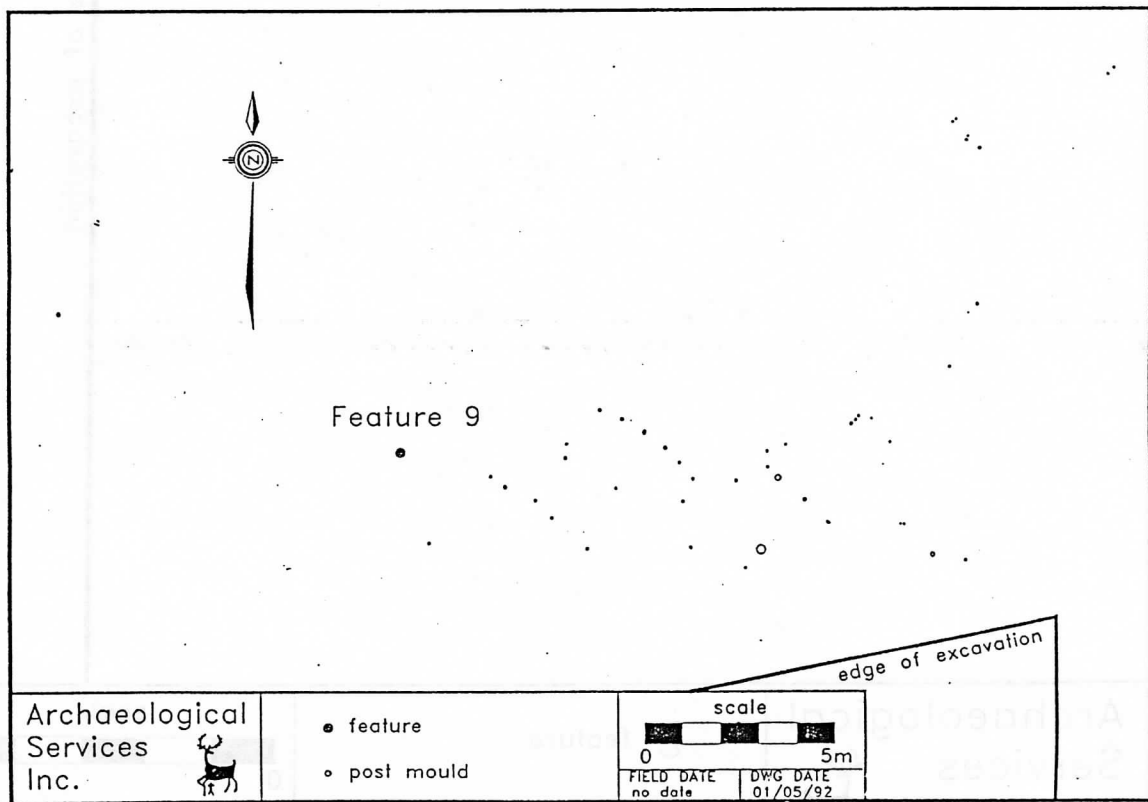
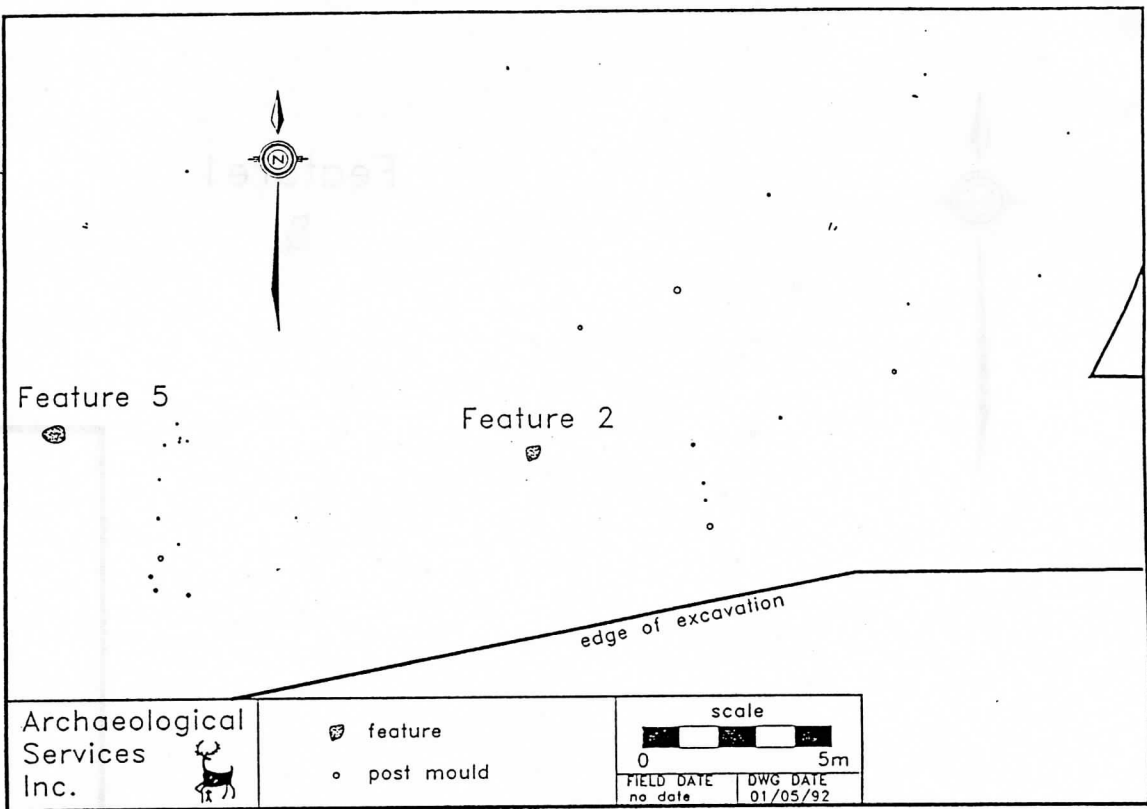
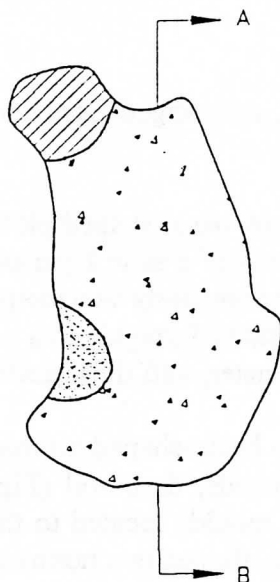


Figure 2a: Feature 1 area of the Birch Site.

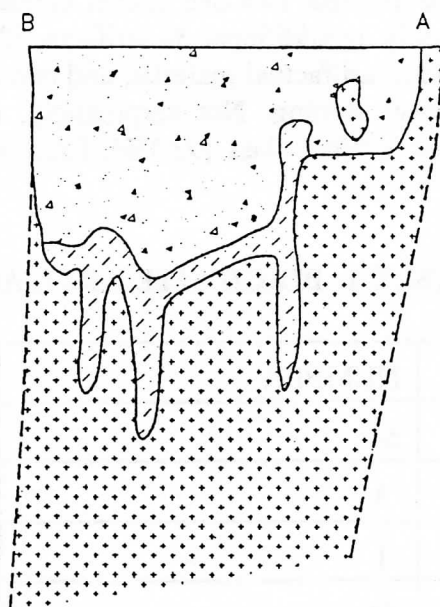


Figures 2b & 2c: Features 2 and 5, and Feature 9 Areas of the Birch Site.

Planview








Profile



Archaeological
Services
Inc.



	post mould		light brown sand
	dark brown soil, charcoal		grey clay
	medium brown soil, charcoal		

scale 1:10

FIELD DATE	DWG DATE
no date	10/03/92

Figure 3: Feature 1 Plan and Profile.

evenly spaced relative to each other, and ranged from 5 to 18 cm in diameter. Posts sectioned ranged in depth from 12 to 21 cm.

Feature 5 was an ovate, shallow basin-shaped pit that measured 60 cm in length, 45 cm in width and 22 cm deep. Fill consisted of a sand layer overlaid with a mottled brown soil. No artifacts were present (Figure 3). Approximately two metres to the east of Feature 5, a cluster of 12 post moulds would appear to be arranged roughly in a north-south alignment (Figure 2.b). The posts ranged from 5 to 14 cm in diameter, and those sectioned ranged from 7 to 14 cm deep.

Feature 9 was a circular, deep basin-shaped pit that measured 25 cm in diameter, 13 cm deep, and was filled with a homogenous, dark soil (Figure 3). No artifacts were recovered. Within the extensive cluster of post moulds located to the east of Feature 9, a double row of posts approximately four metres apart, aligned in a northwesterly-southeasterly direction, may be discerned (Figure 2.c). In total, these 16 posts may represent a type of open-ended structure that was occupied on a short term basis. The posts ranged from 6 to 9 cm in diameter, and those sectioned ranged from 10 to 37 cm deep.

Artifact Analysis

The total artifact assemblage from the 1989 and 1990 investigations consisted of 54 ceramic fragments, three lithic artifacts and one faunal element. In effect, the 1990 salvage excavation of the site yielded only an additional 34 artifacts, 32 of which were from Feature 1. Features 2, 5 and 9 were devoid of artifactual material, and two artifacts were recovered with no feature association during shovel shining. Not surprisingly, despite the small sample size, ceramics account for the largest artifact class (93.1%), followed by lithics (5.2%) and faunal material (1.7%).

TABLE 1: BIRCH SITE ARTIFACTS

ARTIFACT CLASS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Ceramics	54	93.1
Lithics	3	5.2
Faunal Remains	1	1.7
Total	58	100.00

Ceramics

The ceramic assemblage consists of 48 plain body sherds/unanalyzable fragments, two neck and/or shoulder sherds, one complete rim sherd and three rim fragments, representing a minimum of four vessels.

The complete rim was recovered during the controlled surface collection of the site in 1989. It is from a vessel exhibiting an incipient collar and a convex interior profile. Collar decoration consists of simple linear impressed obliques, with an incised horizontal line below the obliques. The lip is decorated with linear impressed notches (Figure 4). According to MacNeish's (1952) ceramic typology it appears to be Sidey Notched, although vessels of this type usually have well developed collars.

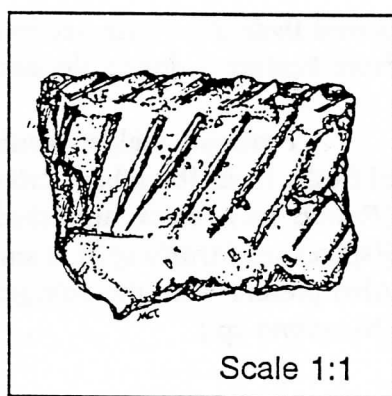


Figure 4: Complete Rim

The remaining three unanalyzable rims can provide information on the temporal placement of the site. One rim, recovered during the controlled surface collection, lacks a neck. It is derived from a collared vessel with a straight interior profile. Collar decoration consists of simple linear impressed obliques. The vessel lip is flat and undecorated. Although it is not possible to ascertain whether the neck is plain or decorated, the rim does appear to be from a Huron Incised vessel.

A second partial rim found during the controlled surface collection is missing the lip. Decoration consists of linear impressed obliques and it also appears to have be from a Huron Incised vessel. The neck is plain. The third unanalyzable rim was recovered during the excavation of Feature 1. It is complete except for the lip. Collar decoration consists of incised obliques over linear punctates. The neck is plain.

Despite the limited nature of the ceramic assemblage it does help determine the temporal placement of the site. The presence of simple obliques, the lack of neck decoration and the presence of lip decoration is suggestive of the Late Iroquoian period (A.D. 1400-1550). This is consistent with Warrick's (1988: 29) assignment of the site to the post-Middle Iroquoian period.

Lithics

Three pieces of lithic material were recovered, none of which were located in a feature. Two are pieces of shatter, and one is a retouched flake of Onondaga chert.

Faunal Remains

One bone fragment was found on the surface prior to excavation. It is too small to be identified.

Floral Remains

Soil samples were analyzed from Features 1 and 2 by S. Monckton. The double bucket method was employed to process soil samples; the suspended plant material was poured through a 0.425 mm screen, collected into cloth pouches and allowed to dry. Dried material was then passed through a series of screens whose apertures measured 2.00, 1.00, and 0.297 mm. These fractions were sorted separately. The material larger than 2.00 was separated into wood charcoal, other plant parts, uncharred organic material, mineral and unidentified plant remains. Below this screen, only seeds were removed. Material was examined under a stereoscope at varying degrees of magnification. The wood charcoal was analyzed provided that the fragments were at least 2 mm

across their transverse sections. One fragment of a charred bean cotyledon was also recovered from Feature 1 during the excavation.

Feature 1 yielded a substantial quantity of plant remains (Table 2). Included were a range of fleshy fruits [bramble (*Rubus* sp.), elderberry (*Sambucus* sp.), strawberry (*Fragaria* sp.), cherry (*Prunus* sp.), black nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*), and grape (*Vitis* sp.)], other noncultigens [(spikenard (*Aralia* sp.)), a small grass (*Elymus/Agropyron*), and several unidentified specimens. Also present were the cultigensmaize (*Zea mays*), sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*), and tobacco (*Nicotiana* sp.).

**TABLE 2: FEATURE 1 PLANT REMAINS
ABSOLUTE NUMBER OF SEEDS**

TYPE	NUMBER	%	TYPE	NUMBER	%
Sunflower	20	30.30	Black Nightshade	3	4.54
Maize	1	1.52	Grape	1	1.52
Bean	1	1.52	<i>Prunus</i>	1	1.52
Tobacco	1	1.52	Spikenard	1	1.52
Bramble	10	15.15	Small Grass	1	1.52
Elderberry	6	9.09	Unidentified	1	1.52
Strawberry	4	6.06	Unknown	15	22.70

Of special interest was the quantity of sunflower achene fragments in Feature 1. Among the fragments were five whole achenes. Part of a seed is the only evidence of sunflower meat. It is possible that this is evidence of snack food eaten at the site. While sunflower is common on Iroquoian sites, it rarely if ever dominates a sample. Maize is represented by a single embryo fragment and several cupules. There is one tobacco seed.

Some types of non-cultigen plant remains can be more difficult to interpret. Spikenard for example is an opportunistic plant which grows in disturbed areas and produces a great amount of seeds. While it is possible that it became charred inadvertently, spikenard does occur with some consistency in archaeological deposits throughout southern Ontario and may be present in Feature 1 due to its potential use as a food or medicine (Monckton 1990).

The most abundant type of fleshy fruit at the Birch site appears to have been bramble, followed by elderberry and strawberry. These are common fruit taxa on other Late Iroquoian sites and they are indicative of a disturbed habitat near the site (Monckton 1990). Ethnohistoric information concerning the Huron use of these fruits indicates that they were an important source of food in addition to cultivated plants (Tooker 1964:62). Berries especially were gathered when plentiful and dried for winter use to give taste to prepared foods such as breads and stews.

Maple (*Acer* sp.), beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), white pine (*Pinus strobus*), spruce (*Picea* sp.), and an unidentified conifer are represented in the wood charcoal sample from Feature 1. Although the sample was not quantified due to its small size, maple would appear to dominate, followed closely by beech. This is consistent with other analyses of Iroquoian sites in the Huronia area (Monckton 1990), and represents the proximity of the site inhabitants to a mixed conifer-hardwood forest. Feature 2 produced only wood charcoal of maple (*Acer* sp.), beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), and an unidentified conifer.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The Birch site (BcGw-29) is an Iroquoian component dating to the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries, based on an assessment of the limited rim sherd sample. The absence of longhouse features, middens or a palisade, the small size of the site, and the small artifact assemblage suggests that it was occupied on a short term basis for a special purpose. Indeed, while few special purpose sites with settlement pattern data have been documented, previous attempts to interpret non-village sites in the archaeological record have focused on a number of attributes, including site location, size, density, artifact assemblages and floral and faunal remains (Pendergast 1969; Smith 1979; Williamson 1983; Wright 1972).

It is unlikely that the site represents a temporary hunting or fishing camp as only one fragment of bone was recovered. It would be expected that a larger faunal assemblage would be present on the site if those activities were carried out. Instead, it is possible that the pattern of post moulds and features represent loci where summertime activities took place. Feature 1, for example, may be associated with two separate post alignments that formed wind-breaks, which would have provided shelter for the site inhabitants. Feature 1 contained numerous carbonized plant remains that may be evidence of gathering and processing activities that took place at the site during the summer and fall.

At the Robin Hood site, A Late Iroquoian component in Pickering Township, the pattern of open-ended longhouse structures in the eastern locus was interpreted as evidence of four sequentially occupied isolated rural agricultural cabins not unlike those reported by the Jesuits (Williamson 1983). While it is clear that the Birch site settlement pattern does not resemble that of an extensively used agricultural cabin site, it is possible that the seasonal activities conducted at Birch originated with the same people who would have been responsible for the tending of cultivated fields. Among the Huron, these subsistence activities were conducted by women who spent time away from the main village during the growing season. Short trips to gather wild fruits in season could have been made from either these temporary homes, or from the main village, and the Birch site may represent a site type that reflects a brief occupation during the summer round of agricultural activities. If the Birch site had been occupied for an extended period of time, however, as Robin Hood was thought to be, one would expect at least some evidence of children, who would have accompanied their mothers in the agricultural fields.

The small ceramic assemblage may be compared on a tentative basis with several Iroquoian components located on the same broad ridge in the Innisfil uplands (Figure 1). Three

Iroquoian components that have been identified as villages, including the Little site (BcGw-15), Little II (BcGw-28) and the Wiacek site (BcGw-26), have been dated to the Middle Iroquoian period (Lennox et al 1986; Warrick 1988). The recently discovered Wellington site (BcGw-55) has also been dated to this period (Archaeological Services Inc. 1992).

Only one village is of the same approximate age as the Birch site within the immediate vicinity. The Molson site (BcGw-27) is located 1.4 km to the southeast and was reported to be a 1.8 ha village site dating to approximately A.D. 1580. The rim sherds collected by Warrick were dominated by Sidey Notched and Huron Incised types (Warrick 1988:22). It is conceivable, therefore, that the inhabitants of the Birch site were affiliated with the Molson village.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the following individuals for their contribution to the Birch site excavation and this paper: Mr. Rick Sutton, field director, and his crew - Lorenz Bruchert, Bruce McGaw, Shane Staniek and Terry Powis; Mr. Andrew Allan for reproducing the field drawings; Ms. Monicke Thibeault for illustrating the rim sherd; and Dr. Gary Warrick for providing information regarding his original assessment of the site.

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